



Lithuanian Christmas tree decorations in the making. In Lithuania the decorations are made of real rye or wheat straws, but American drinking straws are more pliable and even better adaptable to this art form. For the past many years the Lithuanian Christmas tree at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry was the greatest attraction surpassing all other nationality trees in its originality, artistry, and beauty. The designs are the creations of the art department of Maria (Lithuanian) High School. (Foto Vories Fisher, Museum of Science and Industry.)

ornaments of straw: the šiaudinukai, ornaments made by stringing stalks on twine into a myriad fantastic geometric shapes. One sees triangular and rectangular bells with colored bead clappers; chains, festoons, simple triangles and elaborate bird cages.

Color and gentle movement are contributed by birds made of whole egg-shells, some white, some, dyed in various hues, all with beaks, wings and tails of colored paper.

A constant twirling movement draws the eye to still smaller birds directly beneath the tips of some branches. These are made of walnut-shells with wings of feathers, birchbark or metallic paper; the slightest breeze keeps them in motion.

Here and there one discerns "saulutės", flower-like paper creations embellished with shiny beads or mirror fragments.

Atop the tree is a glittering reproduction of the beloved way-side crosses of Lithuania.

The ornaments described were familiar to pre-World War I Lithuania, used as decorations for year-round festive occasions and daily enjoyment. In his "Lietuvių Tautodailė", A. Rukštelė writes: "A Lithuanian, spending the greater part of the year in his beloved home, could not have it plain and unadorned. In former times, the home interior may have been dark, because of the tiny windows, but color and beauty were provided by the gaily-colored hand-woven textiles, by the intricately hand-woven towels hung against the wall on beautifully carved towel racks, and by the **hand-made little suns and birds**, hung from the rafters."

In certain regions of Lithuania, a miniature tree bedecked with straw ornaments and birds, played a prominent part in traditional wedding customs. The tree was hung in the corner where the bridal couple sat, and had to be "purchased" from the bride's family by the kin of the groom.

With the product of the assembly line and the factory replacing handicraft in Lithuania, the art of making these ornaments was relegated to the dim corner of a very recent past. In Lithuania, as in the United States, store-bought bauble and tinsel decked the trees at Christmas. Most Lithuanians had forgotten the "saulutės" and "sietynėliai" which had adorned the homes of their parents and grand-parents. When the Museum of Science and Industry requested a typical Lithuanian Christmas tree, long and diligent inquiry and sleuthing was necessary, until finally, a long-time resident of Chicago, Mrs. Rose Mazelauskas, recalled that she had made such ornaments in her early youth, and reviving her memory, in due time produced sample ornaments. Since the appearance of the first Lithuanian Christmas tree at the Museum, this revived art has grown in popularity and has become a cherished Lithuanian tradition.

CHRISTMAS AMONG THE PUEBLO INDIANS

Described by Pat Parmelee

I shall never forget that Christmas Eve and morn (1951). An elder brave, in bright blanket, profile etched against the white inner wall of the little mission church, stood motionless for nearly two hours; Indian mothers were close by with babies wrapped securely on backs with a single blanket circling both; walls of the church were worn in soft curves by pressure of many backs throughout the years. The church was small but beautifully proportioned, curved ends of viga (beams) in high ceiling, symbolic Indian paintings behind altar, carved wooden balcony at rear loaded with little Indian boys bursting with bird whistles the minute the drums sounded.

It ended with the priest turning and asking us all to join in singing Silent Night. No sooner started than out of the night came the spine-tingling sound of those great drums — six of them — and within the church the gay frenzy of birds blown by the little Indians boys packed in the balcony above us. It was thrilling! I could feel my hair rising. We melted back against the side walls of the little church, then straight through the center came the dancers led by the drummers and chanters. It was the Buffalo Dance first, with real buffalo head-dress on the men — two buffalo men, two buffalo women, two mountain sheep (men with a single stick in hand), four deer — sticks in each hand dancing in three-legged fashion. They bent over and danced and walked on "four feet", and two antelopes, who were little boys. The patterns were intricate and fascinating. Costumes and headgear quite perfect. Faces painted black. Hands painted white to remove from personal to spirit realm.

We followed the dancers out of the church and the second group in—a long line of braves with curled mountain-goat headgears. For a few moments I found myself directly behind the six drummers right in the midst of old men chanters till one stern faced old man pushed me



The apt. of the Taos pueblo in New Mexico, similar to the apt's of San Felipe and Santo Domingo of which Miss Parmelee writes. In the foreground are the stoves within which the Indians prepare their food. (Foto by Fin).

away to a proper distance. I, of course, was out of place but unintentionally so. I literally was chanting with them, I felt so much a part of it all.

As the second group moved out of doors in came the third, wearing the long feathered bonnets of the Comanches. The trailing feathered trains of the bonnets made sweeping curves as they arched and dipped to the drum beats. Old men, the wise ones, chanted close to the drummers, hands in occasional speaking gesture. The simplicity and depth of a people who worship God the Spanish way and in their own ancient way under one roof, in one breath!

When the third dance was completed, then out into the night dancers and drums disappeared. Back to the sacred Kiva chamber. And all was still.

San Felipe is on the Rio Grande southwest of Santa Fe. Adjoining it, following up stream is the much larger and more populous Santo Domingo pueblo. The itinerant priest went on to Santo Domingo and so did we, arriving about 3 AM Christmas morning. The mission church there was larger and newer (The one in San Felipe was built in 1700). A huge fire was burning outside the church doorway. The Mass was much shorter here and while we awaited the dancers we gratefully hovered close to the roaring flames. At last from the distant Kiva the sound of drums broke the stillness. We found choice places inside the church. First came the Hunting Dance with over sixty braves, two drummers and the chorus. The headgear was a turquoise blue band with a single long vertical white eagle feather at the crown of the head and shorter ones falling over the ears. The vertical feathers were beautiful in the rhythmic rise and fall of the large massed group.

As this group disappeared into the night, in came another large group of sixty or more. This time men, women and children, graded down to quite little ones, probably about six years old. It was a Basket Dance. There were an equal number of braves and women grading down to children at the end of the lines. All the men sang. There were no chanters. A single big drum was brought in wrapped in a cloth covered with eagle down feathers. The dance unfolded in delightful intricate patterns with never a misstep even to the tiniest child.

The end of the dance was noteworthy, for it was a perfect example of the natural blending of the primi-



Compare a "Faur" (stove) of French Habitants in the Quebec province with that of the Indians of New Mexico. Jacques Carriere, a member of the Montreal French Folk Dance group "Bullfrogs and Grasshoppers", is pictured above. The location is near Mont Tremblant in the St. Ange parish. (Foto by Fin).

tive with Christian worship. One of the old Indian men went up behind the altar rail calling out in Indian language as, one by one, the dancers filed up to the altar rail passing him then down to the rear of the church, dipping fingers into holy water, there, making a complete graceful turn with genuflex and then quietly out into the night air.

After all were gone, the guests quietly followed. As we reached the outer gateway we looked back. Just over the church the crescent wanting moon broke through a bank of dark clouds and a brilliant star shone above. The end of an unforgettable night — Christmas Eve and Morn in the ancient pueblo.



LITH PROVERBS AND RIDDLES

Mrs. Justina Yankaitis, one of our readers from Rockford, Ill., wrote:

"I like VILTIS the way it is — friendly and folksy. I am very fond of Lithuanian sayings and riddles and would like to see some in your magazine. I like to read things about old Lithuania."

Mrs. Yankaitis sent the following saying and riddle. How about other Lith readers doing the same

— Do not praise the day ere night falls.

— (Riddle) Born in the forest, lived in a forest and came to a home to weep (a violin).

I'll also add two of my mother's favorite expressions:

—Kad katės lotų šunų nereiktų (If cats would bark ther'd be no need for dogs — referring to substitutes which don't work).

— Kur trumpa ten truksta (When the string is short in the first place it keeps on snapping — referring when things don't seem to go right).

How about more? Let's have them.